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both a psychological and a ritual necessity. Notwithstanding this preference for sons, in actual practice no discrimination is observed in the treatment of children on the grounds of their sex.

As a rule infants are treated with affection. Until a child is four or five years old, it is mainly a responsibility of the mother. The mother nurses it whenever it starts crying indicating its desire to be fed. The child sleeps with its mother in the night and is at liberty to suck whenever it likes. Feeding of the child is primarily the mother's duty. However, when it is six to eight months old, elder sisters, female relations and male members of the household may start sharing this task with her by occasionally giving solid food to the child. While other relations give some food to the child occasionally, its attachment to the mother does not diminish in any significant way, as it is breast-fed by her until it is four or five years old. In teaching the child regular habits of sphincter control, standing, walking and speaking the mother's share is very considerable.

On the whole, an infant is the cause of delight to the family, and it is often fondled and carried about by the elders. They all invariably make funny faces and peculiar noises to make the baby smile, fondle it in many different ways, and find great enjoyment in imitating its meaningless sounds.

The situation radically changes after the child reaches the age of five or six years. Now the parents must be strong and should start disciplining it. At this stage the child finds the father an authoritarian figure and begins to fear him. The liberty that he was allowed during his early childhood is increasingly curtailed. Now the accent is on good behaviour and regular habits. The child is more frequently spanked for being troublesome. Absorbed in the care of a younger baby, the mother may often have to leave the elder child to spend most of his time in his own way. During the day-time he mostly plays out of doors with other children of his age-group. As he grows older the discipline becomes more and more difficult. At first he was punished for being 'troublesome' or for 'crying without reason', but now he has to distinguish clearly between things to be done and things not to be done. The child must be very particular about the latter. These include mostly urinating and defecating inside the house, demanding food and money at odd times too often, beating younger brothers and sisters, stealing, lying and using foul language. As a general rule, the

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854 needs of the child. Attention given to the infant during these months is fairly constant. Even in the poorer families the mother does not go out to work, leaving the child alone at home, during these months; although her domestic duties may require partial abandonment of the child in the busy hours of morning and evening. In the families on the upper economic levels of the community the infant is well looked after indeed; its crying is looked upon as
[853] a sign of distress and everything is done to pacify it. In the matter of breast feeding no definite schedule is followed: the child is fed whenever 'it is hungry and asks for food, by crying' or when 'the mother's breasts become heavy'. At night the infant sleeps with the mother, generally with a nipple in its mouth and is allowed to
[863] suck whenever it desires. Toilet training at this stage is completely neglected, and soiling of clothes does not arouse any disgust. It is taken in a matter-of-fact way, and the wet clothes are changed whenever they are noticed by the mother or any other female relative. When the child starts crying the usual way to pacify it is for the mother to offer it her breast. If this is not possible at the moment, or if it fails to achieve the desired objective, other methods may be tried. The mother, a female relation or a sibling may take up the child, mildly pat it continuously on the back and hum a lullaby to send it to sleep. It may be put in a cradle attached to a swing and rocked slowly. Another method very commonly employed by anyone who happens to be near the crying child is to distract it by making funny noises or by engaging in a one-way conversation with it. Recourse may also be taken to a gentle massage of its genitals by the mother or one of its siblings.

855 After this stage of early infancy, during the pre-walking stage, the pattern of treatment accorded to the child is somewhat different. About three months after birth the mother is called upon to take her full share of household and economic duties, and consequently she can no longer give her undivided attention to the child. Other women members of the household, particularly older sisters, now come increasingly to share this responsibility. When the child is a little older and 'it is easy to handle it' menfolk also begin to look after it now and then. At this stage it does not receive the constant attention which it received during the earlier stage, and the frequency and duration of periods of partial abandonment also increase. Feeding continues to be irregular. At four or five months some soft foods are gradually introduced. When the child

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shows signs of digesting these well, siblings and other members of the family begin giving bits of food to pacify the baby when it starts crying. During this stage people love to handle the child, and there is very considerable fondling and play. No effort is made to establish sphincter control in the child at this point. Every possible help is given to the child to learn to stand and walk. While people take great delight in imitating the sounds made by the child, efforts are also made to teach him to talk. Words for grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters are generally the first to be taught. In a state of mental agitation and worry the mother may occasionally spank the child; but this is definitely disapproved and when detected the mother is always reproached by the elders for doing so.

With some modifications this continues even during the early childhood, up to the age of about three. When the child learns to walk it is carried about less by the elders. Now and then it may be left to play by itself in the backyard or in the lane in front of the house. Help in its learning processes continues to be given, and elders indulge in considerable fondling of the child. Weaning is not attempted unless necessitated by the mother's pregnancy or by the 'drying up of her breasts'. Attempts at toilet training are made at this stage. When the child wakes up in the morning the mother seats it on the hollow made by joining her feet and keeps on making a hissing sound which is believed to induce a child to ease itself. Now and then the child is taken to a corner, the cloth covering its genital organs is removed, and the hissing sound is made to make it urinate. If the child wets or soils its clothes at this stage the mother or a sibling will say, '*Chhi*, you are dirty'. But this is done with a smile and there is hardly any reproach in the remark.

When boys are seen manipulating their organs the elders smile and playfully remove their hands from them. Boys invariably start doing so again, and are not admonished. This amuses rather than irritates the older members of the family. While the sex experience of the children is confined wholly to their manipulation of genital organs, their sex knowledge is considerably wider. Sharing the same room with their parents, they have frequent opportunities of watching them engaged in the coital act. Even at the age of three the vocabulary of several children includes the words for penis, vagina and copulation.

LIVING TOGETHER

515 Sponging children with warm water is now often replaced by two or three cold baths per week; the frequency being more among the Brahmins and Komtis and less among the Muslims and the
861 untouchables. The elders practise considerable deception in their dealings with the children. Efforts at disciplining them tend to be rather erratic; and extremes of affection and strictures are by no means uncommon. Jealousies between siblings may be induced by members of the family who take delight in watching the irritation, anger and aggressiveness of little children. Tantrums during this stage are frequent. The methods commonly employed to pacify the child are: distracting it by making funny noises, rocking it in a cradle, offering it food or milk, scolding it loudly, threatening it, and finally boxing its ears and spanking it.

855 Later childhood begins at about five and continues until the advent of adolescence. At this stage the children form their own
[857] play-groups; spending several hours of the day in their respective age-groups. Now they are free to play in the streets and the open
[866] ground outside the village. Maternal attention is now considerably reduced; the elders keep an eye on them, but apart from this they have considerable freedom. As they grow older solicitation of affectionate responses through handling, play and fondling gradu-
[863] ally diminishes. Toilet training becomes strict, and the child is expected to have full control over defecation and urination. Cleanliness is insisted upon, and any failure on his part in this respect arouses anger in the elders. The erring child is ridiculed,
[864] chastised and punished. Now they must wear clothes and begin to learn to hide their genitals. If the elders find their organs exposed they point to them and ask, '*Arre*, what is that? Why are you exhibiting that little thing?' Children often develop a sense of shame at this stage, blush at such remarks, hide their organs and
861 run away from the elders. Discipline becomes more rigorous and physical punishment is more frequent. Rewards for good behaviour include praise, partiality and favoured treatment on the part of the parents, larger share of food and small gifts of money. Punishments, on the other hand, include rebukes and threats, ridicule, threats to report the matter to the father, spanking and occasionally denial of food or playing things or even locking up in a solitary room. Considerable dishonesty is practised by elders in their dealings with children, which is often detected by the latter and angers them all the more.